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FOREIGN - COMMENT

ITALY'S "BLACK-SHIRT GOVERNMENT"

DREADED IN THE YEARS since the war as fomenters of revolution, using the methods of the most rabid Russian Bolsheviks, but in the cause of conservative government, the Italian Fascisti, we are told, have now imposed a strong régime on Italy, by process of a bloodless revolution in which King Victor Emanuel of Italy invited the leader of the Fascisti, Benito Mussolini, to form a cabinet to replace the Facta Ministry. Some Rome correspondents say that the King authorized him to establish "nothing less than a dictatorship under royal sanction." The head of the black-shirted Fascisti, who, by the way, shows a white shirt in his photographs, arrived in Rome, we are told, "to meet the triumph and troubles of a Cæsar." But a New York Italian newspaper, *Il Progresso*, features a headline article with the words "the King is master," thus voicing a protest of various Italian newspapers against the foreign interpretation of the Premiership of Mussolini as a dictatorship. Nevertheless some foreign editors point out that a Fascisti manifesto issued in Rome declares that "from this moment Mussolini is the Government of Italy" and he is "responsible for the safety of the state, of the ministers and of the Parliament." We read further that "any act against the government institutions would be rebellion against Mussolini." In Mussolini's own words, addrest to the Italian populace after his conference with the King of Italy, we are apprised that Italy has "not only got a Cabinet but she has also got a government, a strong government, such as she has needed for many years past, but never obtained," and the Rome *Messagero* expresses the wish that Mussolini's "strong hand in demolishing will be equally strong in reconstruction, in pacifying, in restoring spiritual, economic and political greatness to Italy."

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LEADER OF THE FASCISTI.

Benito Mussolini, Italy's new Premier and head of the Fascisti, who says "we intend to follow a policy of national dignity in our relations with foreign countries."

The Italian press in general praise King Victor Emanuel for his firm attitude in refusing to sign a decree for a state of siege, which the retiring Facta Cabinet had submitted to him, and laud the King for choosing Mussolini to head the Government. The *Giornale d'Roma* says:

"Five sovereigns of the House of Savoy have abdicated in the past for the safety of the mother country. The present King also would have abdicated rather than have a single drop shed in civil war."

In the opinion of the Rome *Idea Nazionale*, "a national revolution has been accomplished in the name of Italy and the King," and "this has been possible through the virtue and merit of the King." Rome dispatches point out that at thirty-six years of age Mussolini has reached the pinnacle of fame and power in the highest post in Italy, and some observers predict that he will "go down in history as one of the greatest figures in Italy's national life." He is described as being of average height with tremendous depth of chest which gives the impression of formidable physical strength. Piercing dark eyes illuminate his clean-shaven visage. His hair is closely cropped and he "wears the inevitable black shirt of the Fascisti." His clothing is described as being of good material, but not pretentious, and he is pictured personally as "a dynamo of energy, activity and will power." In a statement to the press correspondents, Premier Mussolini said:

"We intend to follow a policy of national dignity in our relations with foreign countries, not a policy of adventure, but one of friendship to those nations displaying friendship for us. Our policy in internal affairs will be one of strict economy, discipline and the restoration of our finances. The Fascisti movement, which began as bourgeoisie, now has become Syndicalist, but of national Syndicalism, taking into account the interests of workingmen and those of employers and producers.

"Please emphasize that we are not anti-proletariat."

Of particular interest to American readers is Mussolini's expectation of forming an economic entente between Italy and the United States, and on the subject of immigration, he is quoted as saying:

"Please don't quote me as wishing to give advice to the United States, because my hands are full right here, but I think her policy toward Italian immigration might be improved.

"It seems to me that 42,000 Italians constitute a very small quota to be permitted to enter the United States yearly, considering what hardy workers the Italians are. Perhaps if a careful choice of emigrants, especially of agricultural workers, were made on this side of the water and the United States would permit only picked men to land on her shores, it might prove a benefit to both countries. This is one matter my Government intends to take up with the United States."

Rome editors note with interest that the Mussolini Cabinet is not composed entirely of Fascisti, but in fact contains members who have hitherto been the most strenuous enemies of Fascism. It includes seven Fascisti, five Nationalists, one Democrat and one member of the Catholic party. An American press correspondent at the Italian capital writes as follows:

"Mussolini's intention has obviously been to form a Cabinet representing all groups in the Chamber with the Fascisti in

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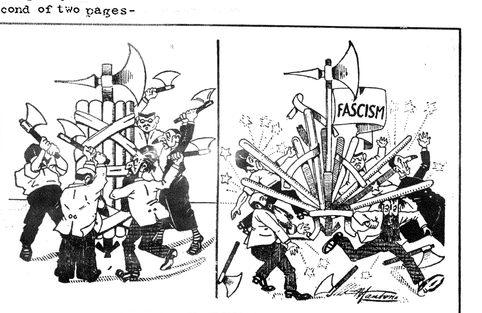
control. He has reserved for himself the arduous task of shaping both the internal and foreign Italian policies, as he will himself keep the portfolios of the interior and of foreign affairs.

"Only one minister in the present Cabinet retains office, namely, Senator Count Theofile Rossi. The most notable figures in the Cabinet are General Diaz, 'Duke of Victory,' who led the Italian Army in its last victorious offensive against the Austrians, Count Thaon di Revel, who has been a strong upholder of Italian supremacy in the Adriatic.

"A feature which must be noticed is that all the members with the exception of Count Rossi are new and untried men. It is this very thing which gives them a large measure of their support, the people being so tired of misgovernment that they are ready to try anything new.

"The danger in this is accentuated by the extreme nationalism sweeping over Italy. The leaders who have gone into power with an avowed policy of intense 'Italianity' may be forced by public opinion, perhaps even against their will, to embark upon adventures. These risks attending the formation of a new and untried Ministry are constantly in the minds of thinking people, but it is a fact that former Cabinets have reduced Italy to such a a state that there are few persons in Italy to-day who are not ready to take the risk and give Mussolini a fair chance to make or fail to make a new Italy. Mussolini now has Italy in the palm of his hand."



AN ITALIAN FLING AT FASCISM.

"All against one—and one against all."

—*Il 420* (Florence).

Fascism has been the subject of recurrent comment in these pages during the past two years and, an Italian press correspondent points out, it is really "a reaction of public opinion against the Mongolian theories imported from Moscow which would have led to nothing less than a sabotage, or miscarriage of victory and a negation of national unity with the substitution of a vague and eminently Social idea, the Internationale." We read then:

"A reaction was bound to be engendered among the sane element of the nation by the powerlessness of the Government to command respect for law, by its amnesty to deserters, by the disorganization of the Army and by the disillusionment of a domestic and foreign policy pointing to the miscarriage of the war; those who had suffered for five years and fought did not intend to see the country die through the incapacity of the Government. To make the law respected and to establish the authority of the State there was but one means, a paradox in terms, but the only one in truth, to substitute for the law a force which should meet violence with violence, without regard to methods, to reestablish the authority and safety of the nation.

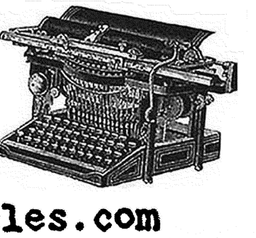
The whole activity of the Fascisti party is to be found in this program from 1920 to the present time, in its acts of violence against masses and against individuals, including the burning of farms and the punitive expedition against the cooperative establishments of the Communists and Socialists, against labor bureaus and workingmen's confederations, and also in the sinister irony of administering castor oil to the Socialist leaders (a fact), and making them confess their political sins in public. The Fascisti also embraced a constructive program and established workingmen's units of defense and a firm and courageous policy against all strikes in public services.

"It is needless to detail the history of the struggle, the episodes of which have filled the press from time to time; but its real import has never been explained. The conflict has been sharp, and the sacrifices have been considerable; some 6,000 Fascisti have lost their lives in a spirit of sacrifice and discipline only possible with men united by an ideal and not by self-interest; but, by their sacrifices, the party has attained a prestige for strength and courage totally lacking with the Socialists and Communists.

ITALY'S ALTERNATIVE.

"Either Fascism will absorb the State or the State will absorb Fascism."

—*Il 420* (Florence).



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